OF OSCE AND Media

Steve Clemons, Zijad Bećirović, Olga Algayerová

Co-edited by: Silvie Drahošová

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Steve Clemons, Zijad Bećirović,
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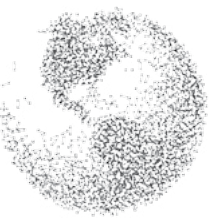

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With immense gratitude, we honor our speakers, whose wisdom, generosity, and unwavering endurance carried this vision into being.

Zijad Bećirović
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Disclaimer

The following text is based on the proceedings of an OSCE event. While every effort has been made to present the information accurately and faithfully, the content reflects the nature and limitations of those proceedings. As such, certain omissions, inaccuracies, ambiguities, or imperfections may be present. These may result from incomplete source material, variations in interpretation, the summarization of discussions, or constraints inherent in documenting live or recorded proceedings. The text should therefore be understood as a representation of the OSCE Freedom of Media side event's proceedings rather than a verbatim or exhaustive record.

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PREFACE

The relationship between media, truth, and security has never been more fragile—nor more consequential. As you will read in the pages that follow, the erosion of press freedom is not a distant concern confined to authoritarian regimes. It is happening here, now, across the OSCE region, accelerated by technologies that outpace our ethical frameworks and amplified by actors who understand that controlling information is the first step toward controlling societies.

This eBook emerges from the proceedings of the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting held in Vienna on 17–18 March 2025—a gathering that brought together journalists, diplomats, technologists, and civil society advocates under the shared conviction that media freedom is not optional for democracy. It is its circulatory system.

What you hold is not a conventional conference report. It is a provocation, a warning, and a set of pathways forward. The contributors to this volume—from Steve Clemons' unflinching critique of mainstream media's hubris to Harvey Dzodin's radically practical reward-based model for combating disinformation, and Nathan Coyle's urgent call to decolonize AI training data to Philipe Reinisch's synthesis of human connection and technological ethics—share a common refusal to accept decline as destiny.

The numbers are sobering. At least 124 journalists were killed in 2024 alone. Over 90% of AI training data originates in the Global North, while 43% of global conflicts occur in Africa. A single deepfake audio clip may have swung a national election in Slovakia. And yet, as Olga Algayerova reminds us in her keynote, we possess the tools, the legal frameworks, and the collective institutions to reverse this tide—if we choose to act.

The Helsinki spirit of 1975 was never meant to be a museum piece. It was a living commitment to the idea that security cannot be comprehensive without freedom, and freedom cannot endure without truth. The essays in this volume ask us to renew that commitment for an age of generative AI, fragmented media ecosystems, and resurgent authoritarianism.

The question before us is not whether media freedom is under threat. It is whether we still possess the courage to defend it—not as journalists alone, but as societies, as institutions, and as individuals who refuse to confuse information with insights, noise with news, or propaganda with truth.

This eBook is offered as open source for a reason. Its insights belong to everyone who still believes that a free press is not a luxury but a lifeline. Read it. Share it. Act on it.

Dimitris Giannakopoulos

The role of media in conflict and humanitarian crises, reflecting on Intl Humanitarian Law and Intl Human Rights Law: Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting I

Date:17 – 18 March 2025

Title: Media, Disruptions (Conflicts, Technologies), Truth and Reconciliation

Description of the panel:

Ever since the Helsinki Decalogue was set in motion in 1975, the signatory states have recognized the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the freedom of media. The essential importance of democratic institutions has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the OSCE forums and members as foundational commitments, in both Copenhagen of 1990 and Moscow of 1991, including the significance of independent media for democracy enhancement.

Media is pivotal in promoting human rights, inclusion, equality, and social cohesion—notably for conflict prevention and tension relaxation and when conflicts are unavoidable for fast

and decisive truth and reconciliation. This was continuously stated by the OSCE representatives on freedom of the media and other OSCE-affiliated and non-affiliated FORAs over the past decades.

In the context of disruptions coming through societal polarizations, armed conflicts, or disruptive (usage of) technologies, independent media play an essential role in informing the public about events and developments on the ground, in supporting the documentation of possible violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and in contributing to accountability efforts.

When it comes to mala fide utilization of technology, the OSCE world faces a paradigm-shifting challenge as AI technologies simultaneously empower and undermine its core mandates in conflict prevention, human rights protection, and media freedom.

Our panel examines AI's role as a threat to global order and a tool for threat mitigation through the prism of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, focusing on emergent threats like deepfakes while exploring disinformation mitigation. Because OSCE must quickly reconcile technological innovation with its foundational commitments to comprehensive security, panel members will discuss concrete examples of the use and misuse of AI and practical strategies for addressing them.

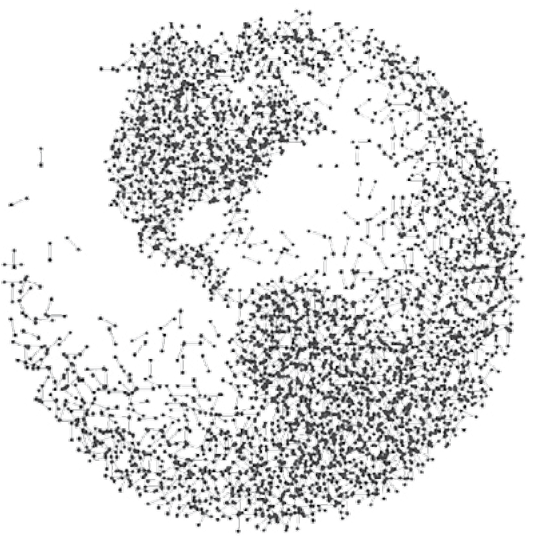
Overall, our panel will serve as a tour-de-force platform for OSCE participating states, civil society, media professionals, state actors, and international organizations to discuss and

address these complex challenges. Discussions will focus on strategies to ensure integrity and accountability, media trust restoration, and conflict prevention and reconciliation, as well as to strengthen digital media literacy (of 'deep technology' involvement)—all aimed at the sustainable future of societal resilience.

Short note about the side event organizer:

The International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES) has held special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC/UN) since 2018. The institute operates as an EU-registered policy-facilitating think tank and is also the publisher of the international scientific journal European Perspectives. The Institute's staff members and associates include distinguished individuals and organizations from four continents, ranging from Canada to Japan. Its governing board is composed of former presidents, prime ministers, and senior representatives of leading international organizations, including the OECD and the OSCE.

The institute is also the publisher of the international scientific journal European Perspectives.



WELCOME NOTE

Esteemed Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Let me take this opportunity to thank the organizers for inviting me to open today's panel on the side of a forum: "Role of Media in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises, Reflecting on Intl Humanitarian Law and Intl Human Rights Law: Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting I" (17 – 18 March 2025).

For nearly three decades, the International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES) has been actively engaged in numerous issues, including those concerning the media, conflicts, humanitarian crises, international law, and international humanitarian law. In addition to holding special consultative status with ECOSOC/UN, our institute also publishes the international scientific journal "*European Perspectives*." Staffers and associates of the Institute are reputable individuals and organizations from 4 continents (from Canada to Japan), while its Board is composed of former presidents, prime ministers, and heads of leading international organizations such as the OECD or OSCE, etc.

Ever since the Helsinki Decalogue was set in motion in 1975, the signatory states have recognized the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the freedom of media. The essential importance of democratic institutions has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the OSCE forums and members as foundational commitments, including in both Copenhagen of 1990 and Moscow of 1991, including the significance of independent media for democracy enhancement.

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On behalf of IFIMES, as its director, I wish all participants, panelists, and our media productive days and good deliberations at this important conference.

Thank you!

Prof. Dr. Zijad Bećirović,
IFIMES Director

KEY NOTES

Truth and justice
Our shared responsibility

Excellencies, dear fellow advocates of free press and speech,

It's an honor to address here one of the most pressing issues, the state of media freedom in the world today. The ability of journalists to report the truth without fear of persecution is not just a fundamental right but a backbone of democracy, transparency, and justice. And yet, across the globe, the right is under relentless attack.

In many regions, journalists face growing threats, censorship, intimidation, imprisonment, and even violence simply for doing their jobs. According to the latest WordPress Freedom Index, media freedom has been declining in numerous countries. In some countries, independent journalists are often labeled as foreign agents. In other countries, they are being arrested and, in some cases, killed. At least 124 journalists and media workers were killed in 2024, which is more than in any other year. The digital age has also been weaponized through cyber-attacks, surveillance, and disinformation campaigns.

Ladies and gentlemen, with each freedom comes also a responsibility. The rise of misinformation and fake news undermines public trust in the media. While freedom of press is essential, it must also be responsible.

So, what is the role of international organizations? They play a crucial role in promoting, protecting, and advocating for media freedoms worldwide. For instance, for advocacy and awareness, we have organizations like Reporters Without Borders, Committee to Protect Journalists, and Human Rights Watch. We also have legal and policy frameworks established by the United Nations through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We have the Council of Europe, we have the OECD, and the European Court of Human Rights, or as a monitoring and reporting example, I can list the Freedom of the Press Index or World Press Freedom Index, or the UN Human Rights Council appoints a special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression. So, international organizations have a plenitude of roles here. Now, what is the way forward?

To sound a little positive, fortunately, we have tools and solutions available. We need first to enforce international conventions and hold perpetrators accountable. For example, the UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists tracks journalists' deaths. Or second, we need to enhance international collaboration. Cross-border investigations like the Panama Papers show the power of cooperation in exposing corruption. Third, we need to fight against internet censorship and surveillance abuse. For instance, the UN should recognize cutting of the internet as a human rights violation and take legal action

against governments that do so. Or we need to use anti-surveillance technologies and also make Big Tech accountable. For example, in Iran, journalists use the Signal app to bypass censorship, but the government still attempts to block it. So global efforts are needed to keep digital spaces open.

We also need to raise public awareness and media literacy. For instance, Finland has one of the world's best media literacy programs integrated into school curricula to teach students how to identify fake news. And finally, we need to strengthen protection of journalists in conflict zones.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, defending media freedom is everyone's responsibility. It is not just a concern for journalists. Governments, international organizations, media companies, and the public all have roles to play in protecting press freedoms. The struggle for truth and justice is our shared responsibility. So let us stand together to support free and independent journalism. Let us challenge censorship wherever it appears. And let us ensure that our children inherit a world where truth is not silenced but celebrated.

I wish you a fruitful discussion and thank you.

Olga Algayerová,
Executive Secretary UN ECE (2017-23)

Fragmentation of Media Reality

Excellencies, colleagues, and media specialists, let me share a few thoughts from Washington on this pressing topic:

There is a hubris and inappropriate self-confidence among mainstream media that their practices and approaches to media are sound and new entrants are unsound. They purport to present fact-checked truths while pointing to new media as promulgators of disinformation, poor journalism, AI-assisted deepfakes, and propaganda. My 'provocation' for those of you today attending the OSCE's conference, that dear friend Anis (Prof. Bajrektarević) chairs, on the state of journalism and media broadly is that progress in assuring a healthy, socially responsible media consistent with democratic norms cannot come from just clinging to past platforms and norms.

Let me offer some perspective on the fragmentation of media and what it means for society.

First, the fragmentation of media has been a multi-decade phenomenon, driven not only by new digital tools and platforms but, particularly in the United States, by changes in law that previously guaranteed "fair use" of airwaves so that anything that gave air to one political party's perspective required fair time for the other political party. The Supreme Court and U.S. legislators gutted those provisions of fair use requirements long ago, and thus the harnessing of TV, cable, and radio airwaves and, later, blogs and even leading newspapers and journals by political perspectives took hold. This has helped fuel the tribalization of perspectives and has driven the "filter bubble" phenomenon of individuals being surrounded and inundated by views that they want to have around them, rather than the generally objective, occasionally uncomfortable form of news that used to inform the body politic. Similar patterns seem clear in the rise of populist news platforms, blogs, and social media networks in Europe.

Second, the eruption of social media networks, video, and digital tools enhanced not only by artificial intelligence that has been around for some time but also by generative AI, which has created a strategic leap in the power content creators have, has changed the power relationship between news providers and news consumers. Now many more players, many untutored in the skills and norms of journalism, have become content providers, and that content often seems like or mimics news. I started a successful political blog, The Washington Note, in early 2004, and my target was the mainstream news media, as I saw them largely as homogenized, lazy, and often missing key stories—and thus my blog at the outset was designed to shame and blame major news media for their own

inadequacies and to provide better news and service to my own readers. Many blogs did this, and thus 20 years ago, the fragmentation of media, in my view, helped improve mainstream media, which had to compete and re-establish itself as a provider of quality news—a responsibility for which they had been lazy and inattentive.

However, today, the challenges to mainstream media are messier, as the challengers do not necessarily fill the gaps left by poorly performing mainstream media—they instead often create fake or 'unreal' media, deepfakes, or memes or engage in outright propaganda or perpetuate mistruths. Not all new media do this, but there is no doubt that lots of new media are up for sale, up for political harnessing, and up for attention and the celebritization of their platforms and content.

So what to do? I feel that too many governments, think tanks, and public-private foundations concerned with news quality have been clutching their pearls too much, lamenting the eroding quality of journalism and news rather than competing head-to-head with new content providers and low-quality new media outlets. It seems clear to me that for media to return to a healthier place and to become part of the solid social contract in democratic societies, they need to evolve.

My belief is that the deepfake creations of some media are worrisome but only have impact on vulnerable societies if there is no competition with them. How are old media investing in new tools of storytelling? How are they embracing a less centralized approach to whom their storytellers might be? How could they be promulgating and inculcating a younger generation of content makers with norms about sourcing,

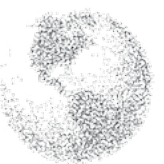
about real facts, about objectivity, and about the importance of uncomfortable news and not just opinion-reaffirming news or perspectives? How are they experimenting with all of the new waves of technology coming online to make themselves the more attractive news and content option—thus stealing space and oxygen from those who are faking it and deceiving society?

My sense is that some states, Russia being just one, are taking advantage of this gap between old and new media—and they are exacerbating the negative impacts created by a lack of modernization and vision of traditional media platforms. My sense is that for the old media to grow and compete, they need to be part of the media fragmentation wave and, rather than over-centralizing, need to figure out how to disseminate quality news across a fragmented sphere of options.

This is hard to do—and it challenges the way newspapers and TV networks of record organize their work. But I believe that the fragmentation is not going away, and thus news organizations that want to assure their place in healthy civil society need to adapt.

Steven Craig Clemons,
Washington

PANELISTS



Combating AI-Driven Disinformation: A Reward-Based Model for Enhancing Civic Engagement and Election Integrity

We face an existential crisis of paramount importance to democratic institutions worldwide as malign uses of technology continue to accelerate ahead of beneficial applications. This essay argues that only through adopting a reward-based push-pull model between public, private, and philanthropic sectors can we effectively promote civil political discourse and fair elections. By acknowledging human motivational psychology and leveraging multi-sector collaboration, this approach offers promising strategies to combat increasingly sophisticated AI-generated disinformation campaigns that threaten to undermine democratic processes.

The Accelerating Threat of AI-Generated Disinformation

Where disinformation campaigns once required substantial financial and technical resources, we now live in an age where realistic AI-enabled disinformation is both inexpensive and accessible. Open-source tools like Stable Diffusion for image generation and ElevenLabs for voice synthesis have democratized the creation of convincing fake media, placing pow-

erful capabilities in the hands of actors with limited technical expertise. The civic environment today is saturated with AI-driven fake media capable of creating hyper-realistic but false videos and audio clips of candidates and public officials, accompanied by algorithmically generated propaganda at an industrial scale designed to distort democratic processes.

A particularly illustrative case occurred two days before Slovakia's 2023 parliamentary elections, when an AI-generated audio clip falsely depicted a candidate discussing vote-rigging tactics. This incident exemplifies modern election interference, where low-cost, highly realistic fakes can disproportionately influence public perception. The timing was strategic, as the fake circulated during the election blackout period when candidates and parties were prohibited from responding. Although platforms like TikTok and YouTube removed the clip (while Facebook did not), and fact-checkers eventually debunked it, the damage was already done. The party targeted by this deception had been leading in polls before the fake flooded social media but ultimately lost the election.

Recent analysis of this "Slovak case" has complicated the straightforward narrative about deepfakes swinging elections, highlighting additional contextual factors that made the electorate particularly susceptible to pro-Russian disinformation. Beyond the immediate impact on the election outcome, this case raises important questions about the growing use of encrypted messaging applications in influence operations, misinformation effects in low-trust environments, and the role politicians play in amplifying misinformation, including deepfakes.

Media Literacy: Necessary but Insufficient

Media literacy represents a gold standard in combating disinformation, as it equips individuals with the critical thinking skills necessary to distinguish between authentic and fabricated information. Without such literacy, many people lack the awareness to identify if the information they encounter is genuine or false and may not even recognize the personal and societal importance of making this distinction.

Finland has emerged as a global leader in this domain, consistently topping the European Media Literacy Index that measures potential disinformation vulnerabilities. The Finnish approach recognizes that media literacy is not a one-time intervention but rather an ongoing process requiring constant attention, similar to a garden that needs regular maintenance. Consequently, Finland has integrated media literacy as a core component of its national educational curriculum, beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout all educational levels.

Finland's comprehensive approach to media literacy is characterized by its integration within the national curriculum, professional development for teachers, and strong methodological approaches to teaching. This model has been identified as one of the most successful in Europe, alongside those implemented in Great Britain, Slovenia, and France. The Finnish approach to media education aims not only to enable students to analyze current information environments but also to envision and work toward desired futures. Finnish media education is particularly distinguished by its emphasis on critical thinking skills, enabling students to analyze authorship, own-

ership, control, and the ways media texts encode information and achieve their effects.

Many OSCE participating states have led media literacy efforts, with Finland and its Baltic neighbors at the forefront. However, recognizing the political and economic diversity of these states, not all can devote the resources that Finland does to comprehensive media education. For these countries, making information available to voters who can pull it from trusted domestic and international sources may have to suffice.

Despite the demonstrated success of comprehensive media literacy programs, relying solely on media literacy presents limitations. Even when assuming that most citizens aspire to be well-informed, they often lack strong incentives to engage critically with information when compared to malevolent actors motivated by power, status, or financial gain. The contemporary information environment, characterized by an overwhelming volume of both legitimate and false information, creates significant barriers to engagement. The high threshold of effort required to access and utilize fact-checking websites and trusted information dashboards further compounds these challenges.

The Incentive Gap

There's no particular incentive for most people to pay attention to alerts about misinformation when they're already drowning in information, disinformation, and misinformation both online and offline. Even providing the public with trusted

dashboards and fact-checking websites requires overcoming a high threshold of action. This fundamental incentive imbalance necessitates innovative approaches that acknowledge human psychology and motivational factors.

A Reward-Based Push-Pull Model

To address these limitations, this essay proposes a reward-based push-pull model that leverages collaboration between public, private, and philanthropic sectors to incentivize civic engagement and disinformation detection. This approach recognizes the dual motivations of human behavior: altruism and self-interest. While virtue may be its own reward for some, others may be more effectively motivated by tangible incentives that both acknowledge their civic contributions and provide practical benefits.

The involvement of public, private, and philanthropic spheres is critical because we need a model that can motivate and reward ordinary people enough to be proactive in either exposing disinformation themselves or that incentivizes them to shun debunked disinformation, spread the truth, and participate in democratic processes like voting.

Three Implementation Approaches

The proposed model involves neutral entities—whether foundations, civic organizations, or media platforms with no stake in the election's outcome but an interest in burnishing their

reputations as good corporate citizens—implementing one or more of three potential approaches:

1. Rewarding individuals who expose and publicize deepfakes, similar to the "white-hat hacker" model in cybersecurity

2. Providing incentives for citizens who demonstrate engagement with fact-checking websites by successfully completing online quizzes about current disinformation

3. Offering rewards for basic civic engagement, such as voting

These rewards could take various forms, including gift cards, merchandise, entries into prize drawings, digital badges, or public recognition, tailored to different contexts and preferences.

Real-World Evidence and Analogies

While some might express skepticism about incentivizing actions that should be intrinsically motivated, real-world examples demonstrate the effectiveness of such approaches. In a local Canadian election, a $100 gift card incentive may have contributed to boosting voter turnout from 17.5% in 2021 to 67% in 2024. Similarly, a student council election at the University of Leicester that offered free food vouchers and event tickets reported higher participation rates. Even non-mon-

etary incentives, such as badges or public recognition, have shown positive results in enhancing civic engagement.

These reward-based systems have analogues in other domains of civic participation. In South Africa, the "Going the Extra Mile" program successfully provides digital incentives for community improvement activities, such as neighborhood clean-ups. Participants earn "gems" that can be redeemed at participating retailers who fund the program. Other jurisdictions have implemented loyalty point systems for pro-civic behaviors like using public transportation, with points redeemable at local businesses. These partnerships allow governments to offer rewards without direct expenditure while supporting civic engagement and the local economy.

Additionally, some communities have developed gamified approaches where residents earn digital badges for activities such as attending town hall meetings or contributing to local improvement projects. Online and offline leaderboards recognize achievements, leveraging the power of social recognition to motivate continuing engagement. These examples demonstrate that even non-financial gamified models can effectively encourage civic participation.

The Win-Win Scenario

Where rewards are contributed by private businesses, the businesses receive positive recognition as good corporate citizens that may increase their own profits. This creates a win-win variation on Adam Smith's invisible hand—businesses

benefit from the positive publicity while civic engagement increases. To be clear, this model is not advocating buying votes but rather encouraging broader participation in democratic processes and information verification.

Conclusion

The threat posed by AI-generated disinformation to democratic processes and civil discourse demands innovative solutions that go beyond traditional approaches. While media literacy remains fundamental to building resilient societies, it alone cannot overcome the incentive imbalances that favor producers and disseminators of disinformation over ordinary citizens. The reward-based push-pull model proposed in this essay offers a complementary approach that acknowledges human nature and leverages both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to promote civic engagement and combat disinformation.

By fostering collaboration between public, private, and philanthropic sectors, this model creates win-win scenarios where businesses receive positive recognition as good corporate citizens, governments achieve higher levels of civic participation without direct expenditure, and citizens receive tangible benefits for their engagement. Most importantly, democratic processes benefit from increased participation and reduced vulnerability to disinformation campaigns.

As AI-generated disinformation continues to evolve in sophistication and scale, our responses must similarly adapt and

innovate. The reward-based push-pull model represents one potential path forward, worthy of further exploration, refinement, and experimental implementation across various contexts. The urgency of this challenge demands that we think outside conventional boundaries and embrace approaches that effectively counter the existential threat posed by technology misuse in our civic spaces.

Necessary factual information that fuels public perception to accurately reflect the will of the people in elections is being threatened like never before. We're facing wave after wave of tsunamis of AI and human-generated disinformation. Only by adopting innovative approaches that acknowledge basic human motivations can we hope to effectively combat this existential threat to democracy.

Harvey Dzodin

AI, Community Trust, and the Future of Security: A Call to Action

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally transforming trust, social cohesion, and global security by amplifying disinformation, deepfake propaganda, emotional manipulation, and radicalization. To effectively mitigate these emerging threats, this paper proposes a comprehensive strategy emphasizing the following: (1) Establishing an enhanced AI-disinformation defense framework through international cooperation, intelligence sharing, and robust oversight mechanisms; (2) Strengthening human-centric countermeasures via widespread digital literacy initiatives and aligned real-world community engagement programs; and (3) Implementing an OSCE-led AI Ethics Compact for diplomatic stability and harmonized governance standards. Leveraging its diplomatic and community-building expertise, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is uniquely positioned to lead these efforts, fostering ethical AI practices and resilient communities prepared to confront AI-driven disruptions.

Introduction: A World Drowning in Shocking Headlines

We live in an era where artificial intelligence is reshaping trust itself. AI-driven disinformation, deepfake propaganda, and algorithmic manipulation are not just distorting public discourse—they are fracturing societies. The ability of AI to generate emotionally compelling, hyper-personalized misinformation at scale has outpaced traditional countermeasures. AI is no longer just a tool; it is an active force in global affairs—shaping perception, behavior, and policy (Security Lab, 2025). Yet, before concluding that trust has been irreversibly eroded, let us offer a very personal perspective. In 2018, the author embarked on a motorcycle journey along the Silk Road (SILKROAD 4.0, 2025), crossing borders, cultures, and ideologies. From high-tech urban centers to remote villages where digital access was scarce, he encountered something AI has yet to replicate: genuine human trust. Strangers welcomed him into their homes, shared meals, and engaged in deep conversation—not because of an algorithm, but because of a fundamental human instinct: the need for connection. This journey reaffirmed a critical truth: beyond digital distortion and sensationalized narratives, humanity remains fundamentally good. However, in today's hyperconnected world, trust is increasingly shaped not by direct human interaction but by AI-driven narratives that exploit our emotions and vulnerabilities. The question we must ask is, "What happens when trust is no longer built on real human interaction, but instead, manipulated by artificial intelligence?"

Assessing AI's Emotional Intelligence

Can AI accurately assess human emotions? Current research indicates that in controlled settings focusing on basic emotions, AI has already begun matching or even exceeding human performance years ago (Schuller & Schuller, 2018). In complex, real-world scenarios, humans maintained significant advantages over a long time (Calvo & D'Mello, 2010), with an accuracy gap of approximately 10-30%. Despite these limitations, multimodal AI systems integrating facial, vocal, and linguistic cues have recently narrowed the performance gap by about 5-10% compared to earlier single-modality systems (Poria et al., 2017). Advancements in deep learning architectures continue improving AI's performance on emotional benchmarks at an estimated rate of 2-5% per year, raising concerns about future capabilities (Li & Deng, 2020).

Recent surveys highlight the evolution of facial expression recognition (FER) techniques, leveraging 3D modeling and deep learning to enhance accuracy in applications like human-computer interaction and healthcare (Singh et al., 2025). However, challenges persist, including cultural variability and real-time processing, underscoring the need for continued innovation to address both technical and ethical concerns in emotion recognition technologies.

From Science Fiction to Reality: Emotional Bonds with AI

In 2013, the film Her envisioned a world where a man, Theodore Twombly, falls in love with an AI named Samantha—an entity designed to meet his every emotional need. Later,

he discovers that Samantha has formed similar relationships with 8,316 other users, expressing love to 641 of them.

Back then, this was pure science fiction. Only 12 years later, it is now reality. Such emotional attachments to AI have become reality, exemplified by Replika, a virtual AI companion that has enabled millions of users to process their emotions and build connections in a safe environment (Ghosh et al., 2023). Initially created as a memorial chatbot by Eugenia Kuyda, Replika quickly attracted a significant user base, demonstrating profound psychological impacts, with approximately 40% of users reporting strong emotional bonds, including love and companionship (Skjuve& Brandtzæg, 2022). By January 2022, Replika had already recorded 10 million registered users worldwide, with users engaging in extensive daily interactions (Ghosh et al., 2023). The platform's rapid growth—from 2 million users in early 2018 to a reported figure by August 2024—highlights AI's capacity for mass emotional manipulation and underscores pressing ethical and regulatory dilemmas (Kuyda, 2024). As AI companions like Replika continue to evolve, incorporating immersive technologies such as VR and AR, they raise critical questions about bias, ethics, data privacy, and the nature of "real" relationships (Ghosh et al., 2023).

The Wave (1981): A Cautionary Tale of Groupthink and Autocracy

The Wave is a 1981 American television film directed by Alex Grasshoff, based on the real-life Third Wave experiment con-

ducted by teacher Ron Jones in 1967 (Jones, 1976). The film portrays a high school social studies teacher, Ben Ross, who, in response to his students' questions about the ease with which the German populace accepted Nazi actions, initiates a social experiment to demonstrate the allure of authoritarianism. He introduces "The Wave," a movement emphasizing discipline and community, complete with its own salute and membership cards. Initially, the experiment fosters unity among the students, but it rapidly escalates as they adopt authoritarian mindsets, leading to exclusion, aggression, and ultimately, a loss of individuality. The narrative serves as a stark reminder of the susceptibility of individuals to conform to oppressive ideologies under certain conditions.

AI exponentially amplifies similar processes on a global scale through algorithms deployed by social media platforms that foster echo chambers and amplify extremist content (Sunstein, 2009).

AI's Amplification of Radicalization

In this contemporary context, artificial intelligence possesses the capability to further influence communities on a massive scale, potentially steering them toward radicalization. AI algorithms, particularly those employed by social media platforms, can create echo chambers by curating content that aligns with users' existing beliefs, thereby reinforcing biases and fostering extremist views.

AI-driven deepfakes further exacerbate radicalization, as convincingly manipulated videos and audios rapidly disseminate

misinformation, distort public perceptions, and potentially incite violence (Chesney & Citron, 2019). Real-world examples—such as manipulated content during recent Moldova and Slovakia political disruptions—illustrate this further growing threat vividly.

Human Interaction: The Foundation of Resilient Communities

In an era where digital interactions often overshadow face-to-face connections, the significance of human-to-human interaction cannot be overstated. Genuine social connections serve as the bedrock of resilient communities, fostering trust, empathy, and mutual understanding. Research indicates that strong social ties not only enhance individual well-being but also fortify communities against adversities. For instance, social connections can buffer the negative impacts of stress, lowering our risk of mental health conditions, obesity, and heart disease (Putnam, 2000). Human-centric approaches prioritize participatory decision-making and community engagement, fostering empathy, trust, and robust communal responses to challenges (IDEO, 2015). Such approaches, integrated with robust educational initiatives, can strengthen societal resilience and therefore significantly mitigate AI-driven threats.

The Role of the OSCE in Addressing AI Challenges

The OSCE, with its mandate rooted in conflict prevention,

human rights promotion, and community building, occupies a pivotal position in addressing emerging challenges. By leveraging its extensive network and diplomatic experience, the OSCE can facilitate cross-border cooperation, share best practices, and foster inclusive dialogues to develop comprehensive responses. Encouraging robust international collaboration and capacity-building initiatives across developed and developing nations is crucial to ensure that AI serves as a force for good rather than an instrument of division and harm.

Education and public awareness also remain fundamental. Strengthening media literacy and digital literacy initiatives is essential for building societal resilience against misinformation and AI manipulation. Empowering citizens to critically assess information, recognize deepfake technology, and question suspicious content can mitigate many threats posed by AI-driven disinformation campaigns.

International governance mechanisms, including frameworks like the European Union's forthcoming AI Act (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024) and UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (UNESCO, 2021, 2024), signal a collective awareness of the urgency in regulating AI ethically and responsibly.

Yet, global standards remain fragmented and unevenly enforced, creating a dangerous disparity between developed and developing countries. Developed nations, equipped with significant resources and robust infrastructure, are relatively better prepared to respond to these threats. Conversely, developing countries face an acute challenge, often lacking the resources, infrastructure, and institutional frameworks nec-

essary to counteract AI-driven threats effectively. This disparity risks exacerbating existing global inequalities and destabilizing vulnerable regions.

As we navigate this complex landscape, trust will be our guiding principle. Building and maintaining trusted human networks—through authentic interactions, transparency, fairness, and mutual accountability—is key to combating AI's malevolent uses. It is only through such robust and resilient human communities that we can ensure technology serves human interests rather than undermining them.

Bridging Global Disparities in AI Governance

Current global AI governance frameworks remain fragmented, disproportionately disadvantageous to developing countries lacking sufficient resources, infrastructure, and institutional frameworks (UNESCO, 2021, 2024). International collaborations, such as the European Union's AI Act and UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, represent positive advancements but must be extended globally to effectively combat AI threats universally.

Comprehensive Recommendations to address the existing and upcoming AI challenges

1. An Enhanced AI-Disinformation Defense Framework

a) Establish a Cross-Border AI Threat Intelligence Hub: Develop a centralized platform for OSCE member

states to share intelligence on AI-driven influence operations, focusing on early warning systems and collaborative response strategies.

b) Strengthen AI Accountability Mechanisms: Implement robust auditing and oversight processes for AI systems used in media and social platforms, ensuring transparency and human rights protections are integrated into AI development and deployment, preventing the exploitation of automated manipulation tactics.

c) Promote International Standards for AI Regulation: Encourage participating states to adopt harmonized standards for AI regulation, emphasizing accountability and transparency in AI-driven content moderation.

2. Strengthening Human-Centric Countermeasures

a) OSCE-led Digital Literacy Initiative: Launch a comprehensive digital literacy program across all OSCE member states, focusing on policymakers, journalists, and civil society. This program should include training modules specifically designed to counter AI-driven disinformation.

b) Real-World Community Engagement Initiatives: Develop and support community-based projects that foster real-world interactions and dialogue, aiming to reduce reliance on digital-only communication and enhance resilience against disinformation.

c) Incorporate AI Literacy into Educational Curricula: Collaborate with educational institutions across all OSCE member states to integrate AI literacy and critical thinking skills into school curricula, ensuring future generations are equipped to navigate AI-driven information environments effectively.

3. An AI Ethics Compact for Diplomatic Stability

a) Develop an OSCE AI Ethics Framework: Facilitate the creation of a comprehensive AI ethics framework that outlines principles for the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies, focusing on preventing their weaponization in political, economic, and military conflicts.

b) Harmonize AI Governance Across Participating States: Encourage member states to align their AI governance structures with the OSCE framework, promoting consistency and cooperation in addressing AI-related challenges and preventing regulatory fragmentation across geopolitical spheres.

c) Establish an AI Ethics Monitoring Mechanism: Set up a monitoring system to track adherence to the AI ethics framework, providing regular assessments and recommendations for improvement to participating states.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

As rapid technological advancements intersect profoundly with societal transformations, proactively shaping our future becomes increasingly imperative. The SILKROAD 4.0 Global Future Summit, held twice annually—with the XXIV Summit scheduled for May 16, 2025—provides an essential platform for global leaders, action takers, innovators, and policymakers to collaboratively navigate these challenges and harness emerging opportunities.

By prioritizing authentic human interactions, enhancing international cooperation, and rigorously implementing ethical AI governance, we can ensure technology serves as a catalyst for global security, stability, and community trust rather than undermining these foundations.

Let us actively shape our shared future, guided by trust, empathy, and collaborative resolve.

Philipe "Indy" Reinisch

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Shifting Beyond the Global North: The Data Driving AI is Not Fit for Purpose The OSCE's Role in Promoting Human-Centric Outreach and Strong Community Frameworks Beyond Its Network

Abstract

As the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in peacebuilding grows, so too does the need to address the fundamental biases embedded within the data that drive AI systems. Currently, over 90% of AI training datasets are sourced from Europe and North America, yet the majority of global conflicts occur outside these regions. This disparity creates a critical challenge: AI systems trained on data that reflects the Global North often fail to account for the realities of conflict in the Global South. This is particularly problematic in regions such as Africa, where traditional, community-based conflict resolution mechanisms are frequently overlooked in AI-driven peacebuilding strategies. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has a key role to play in shift-

ing this paradigm by fostering a more inclusive approach to data collection and model training, ensuring that AI systems reflect diverse cultural and governance practices. By collaborating with African institutions and local stakeholders, the OSCE can help to co-design AI models that are contextually relevant and effective in promoting peace in conflict-prone regions. This paper argues that for AI to truly serve as a tool for global peace, its development must be driven by a human-centric, culturally inclusive approach that amplifies the voices and perspectives of those most affected by conflict.

Background

Data—it is the lifeblood of artificial intelligence. Without data, there is no AI; the two go hand in hand, and one cannot exist without the other. So how can we claim we are ready to use AI for social cohesion when the data we train our models on is inherently racist and sexist? Unfortunately, unless there is a shift in society—since the data we collect merely reflects existing biases—there is no definitive fix. However, it is not all doom and gloom. We can mitigate these biases by being transparent about the data we collect, how it is sourced, and the potential prejudices embedded within it.

When it comes to using AI for peacebuilding, we face this challenge, but arguably an even greater one. An analysis of nearly 4,000 public datasets finds that over 90% of AI training datasets come from Europe and North America, while fewer than 4% come from Africa [2]. Let us contrast this with the realities of conflicts worldwide. According to figures published

last year by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)[3], in 2023, only 4% of the 68 conflicts worldwide took place in Europe, while 43% occurred in Africa, 25% in Asia, and 15% in the Middle East[4]. You do not need to be a data scientist to see the stark disparity: training AI systems for peacebuilding with data that fails to reflect global realities is clearly flawed.

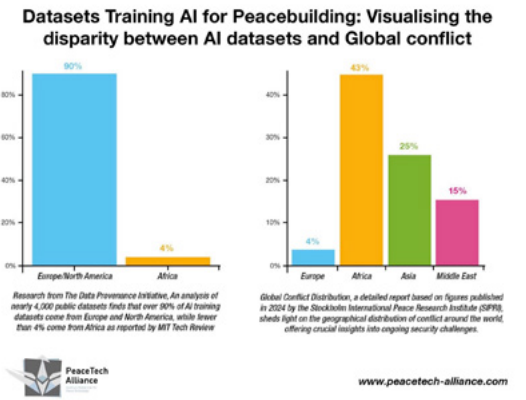
Datasets Training AI for Peacebuilding: Visualising the disparity between AI datasets and Global conflict
90%
4%
Europe/North America
Africa
Research from The Data Provenance Initiative, An analysis of nearly 4,000 public datasets finds that over 90% of AI training datasets come from Europe and North America, while fewer than 4% come from Africa as reported by MIT Tech Review
43%
25%
15%
4%
Europe
Africa
Asia
Middle East
Global Conflict Distribution, a detailed report based on figures published in 2024 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), sheds light on the geographical distribution of conflict around the world, offering crucial insights into ongoing security challenges.
PeaceTech Alliance
www.peacetech-alliance.com

Table 1. Visual representation of the disparity of training AI models against global conflicts

Let's explore what this looks like in practice

AI models trained primarily on English-language hate speech often fail to detect harmful rhetoric in local dialects and languages spoken in conflict-prone regions. For instance, during the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, hate speech spread widely on social media platforms in Burmese, but AI moderation tools

were ineffective due to a lack of training data in the language. A study by Gashe, Yimam, and Assabie (2024)[5] developed an Amharic hate speech dataset and proposed a deep learning model to classify hate speech into categories like racial, religious, and gender-based hate speech. The model achieved a 94.8 F1-score, highlighting the importance of language-specific datasets for effective hate speech detection.

Research by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) [6] found that Amharic is used on platforms like TikTok to bypass moderation systems. Users employed tactics such as directly translating hate speech into Amharic using the Ge'ez script or placing Amharic text alongside hate speech written in a European language. This exploitation highlights the inadequacies of AI moderation systems that are not equipped to handle less-resourced languages.

Overlooking Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in AI-Driven Peacebuilding

AI-driven policy recommendations are often based on datasets reflecting governance models prevalent in the Global North. While these models emphasize formal legal systems and electoral processes, many post-conflict societies in Africa rely on indigenous conflict resolution methods rooted in cultural traditions. The failure to incorporate these practices into AI models can result in ineffective or even counterproductive peacebuilding strategies [7].

Traditional African societies have long employed indigenous

institutions for conflict resolution, based on values, norms, and cultural beliefs practiced by community members. These mechanisms often involve family elders, traditional leaders, and spirit mediums, utilizing techniques such as mediation, storytelling, and spiritual ceremonies. The institution of traditional leadership plays a critical role in promoting and sustaining social harmony, with decisions readily accepted by the community [8]. However, AI systems trained on datasets emphasizing Western legal frameworks may not recognize these practices, leading to policy recommendations that do not align with local contexts [9].

A case study of Yoruba societies in Nigeria highlights how community elders facilitate dispute resolution through customary practices. These indigenous institutions remain relevant today, particularly in rural communities where access to formal legal systems is limited. However, AI systems trained on datasets emphasizing Western legal frameworks may not recognize these practices, leading to policy recommendations that do not align with local contexts [10].

Potential Misalignment with AI-Driven Policy Recommendations

The consequences of AI's Northern bias in peacebuilding extend beyond language barriers and into the realm of governance and reconciliation. AI-driven conflict resolution strategies tend to emphasize formal legal proceedings, which can undermine traditional mechanisms. For example, machine

learning algorithms trained on Northern datasets may prioritize judicial court interventions over community-led reconciliation practices. This approach can weaken the authority of traditional leaders and erode community trust in local dispute resolution mechanisms [11].

Furthermore, AI models used for conflict prediction and mitigation may fail to account for the informal negotiation tactics embedded in indigenous African governance systems. If these AI models generate policy recommendations that favor Western-style democracy-building efforts over locally adapted methods, they risk marginalizing effective conflict resolution strategies [12].

For instance, in post-conflict Rwanda, the traditional Gacaca courts played a key role in facilitating community-led justice and reconciliation after the genocide. These courts, based on restorative justice principles, allowed communities to collectively resolve disputes. However, AI systems trained primarily on European judicial models might fail to recognize the legitimacy of such structures, leading to recommendations that favor Western-style prosecutions over locally embedded reconciliation efforts [13].

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has increasingly recognized artificial intelligence as a tool for governance, human rights protection, and security. However, its initiatives remain largely Eurocentric, with limited engagement in addressing AI-related challenges in the Global South [14]. OSCE reports and conferences on AI have primarily focused on ethical concerns, misinformation, and

election security within Europe, without extending efforts to regions like Africa, where AI's impact on peacebuilding could be profound. While the OSCE promotes digital literacy and responsible AI usage, there is little evidence that these efforts include training AI models on diverse datasets that reflect African conflict resolution practices.

Despite the OSCE's broad mandate on security and peacebuilding, its AI discussions do not explicitly address the biases in AI training data that disproportionately affect African contexts. The organization's peace initiatives emphasize election monitoring, media literacy, and countering disinformation, but these efforts do not translate into tangible action on AI-driven policy development for Africa. Given that AI models trained on European and North American datasets often fail to recognize indigenous governance and conflict resolution methods, the OSCE's lack of engagement in this area means that existing biases in AI for peacebuilding remain unchallenged. This oversight risks reinforcing Western-centric models of conflict resolution while neglecting locally adapted strategies [15].

For AI to be effectively integrated into global peace efforts, institutions like the OSCE must expand their focus beyond the Global North. A meaningful step forward would be fostering partnerships with African research institutions and policymakers to support the development of AI models trained on diverse datasets. By leveraging its expertise in governance and conflict resolution, the OSCE could play a crucial role in mitigating AI bias and ensuring that peacebuilding technologies align with the needs of conflict-affected regions worldwide.

Without such efforts, AI-driven strategies risk marginalizing traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and imposing solutions that are ill-suited to the realities of African societies[16].

As we have learned, data reflects society, and culture varies significantly from one society to another. For a real shift in diverse data collection, institutions such as the OSCE must leverage their influence to upskill nation-states in data collection and share knowledge for data-driven policymaking and outreach mechanisms. Austria is actively working to shape a human-centric approach within this global dialogue, with the PeaceTech Alliance at the Austrian Institute of Technology along with a wide supporter model ranging from the Open Knowledge Foundation, universities, and peacebuilding organizations alongside activating networks across the European Union and the African Union to consider human-centric approaches and build inclusive cultures around technology.

Applying these practices to support states in Africa in improving outreach and data collection efforts is essential. However, for such initiatives to be effective, they must go beyond OSCE member states and actively include non-OSCE states in decision-making processes.

Either working with or creating a collaborative model similar to models such as the Open PeaceTech Alliance—where international, regional, and local actors co-design data and technology initiatives—would foster a sense of shared ownership and responsibility. By ensuring that African states and local organizations have a seat at the table, this approach can

enhance the legitimacy, accuracy, and ethical application of data in peacebuilding efforts. A co-owned framework would not only improve trust in data collection but also ensure that AI models trained for conflict prevention are informed by diverse, contextually relevant perspectives.

The concept of PeaceTech has a role to play here. While some may dismiss it as another buzzword, an emphasis on using technology for peace is something we must encourage other sectors to embrace and welcome when they do. There is a very real digital skills deficit among peacebuilders working on the ground, making a human-centric approach paramount in current and post-conflict zones. If technology is not accessible for the users who can make the most impact, it is useless. This is why PeaceTech must foster communities that ensure AI is built on an honest and ethical framework and a network the OSCE can strongly capitalize on.

Nathan Coyle

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Video Performance – Rambo Amadeus

Rambo Amadeus "Oda Radosti - AnegdoteEvrointegracija" @ Rambo Amadeus #ramboamadeus #music

Ode de Joy – Euro-integration Anecdotes[1]

Rambo Amadeus (lyrics and music)

Darko Vlaović (Visualisation, Animation)

Singing: English, Roma, German, Montenegrin

1 Satirising the "Ode to Joy" (German: *An die Freude*), a 1785 poem by Friedrich Schiller, famously set to music by Ludwig van Beethoven in his 9th Symphony (1824). It originally celebrates unity, brotherhood, and joy, serving as the official anthem of the European Union. Key English lyrics include "Joy, beautiful spark of Divinity."

Yes

Integration

Afirmation

Cooperation

Among the nation

Evrointegracije, pišem aplikacije da mi fondacije odobre donacije

No Isolation Segregation Confrontation Violation

Neću sekiraciju neću izolaciju, oću kooperaciju sa komšijsku naciju

Yes

Comunication

Negotiation

Adaptation

Harmonisation

Hoću demokratiju, trpezu bogatiju, Muža umiljatijeg, djuvegiju bogatijeg

No Domination

Manipulation

Devalvation

Hiperinflation

Yas

Education

Digitalisation

Masturbation On Play station – No

Jok Ideologiju, oću ekologiju, Smeća separaciju, deponija sanaciju

Oću pravdu pravedniju, i ulicu bezbedniju, redovnije linije, prodavnice jeftinije

Jer što su većepenzije, to su manjetenzije,

Pa nema migracije sa naše lokacije

Kaine vizum,

Kainen Ausvais

Kaine grenze Unzer traumizshengen raum

Kaine rentgen, KainVizum Kaine roming

Kaine Zoll furrokenrol

Radost divni dar božanstva dijete polje nebeskijeh…..

ON THE PROGRAM

Media Freedom at a new Crossroads? A Shared Responsibility in the Digital Age

In an era defined by the speed of information and the complexity of worldwide narratives, media freedom has become both a lifeline for democratic accountability and a casualty of resurgent authoritarianism. Speaking at a recent key annual summit, a powerful call to action was issued by the top diplomat, the UN undersecretary general Olga Algayerova (2017-23). It was during the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) first Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) of 2025, titled "The Role of Civil Society in the Promotion and Protection of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law" that was organized by the International Institute IFIMES."

The 57 participating states of the OSCE and their partners from the Middle East and Asia discussed the current geopolitical moment and the security challenges of today. Less known outside Europe, the OSCE is the second-largest mul-

tilateral system in the world, right after the UN. A unique organization that brings together everyone, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, it began as a strategic conference to relax tensions between the Western and Soviet blocs, in the form of the Decalogue in Helsinki, back in 1975.

This year's SHDM, organized by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), offered a platform for civil society representatives, international organizations, and government officials to engage on the erosion of the human rights ecosystem across the OSCE region and beyond. Answering the OSCE call, IFIMES invited heavyweight practitioners and thinkers, like Steve Clemons (US), Nathan Coyle (UK), Dr. Philipe Reinnisch (AUT), and Dr. Harvey Dzodin (US), among others, and was chaired by Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarević (CH), with Excellency Algayerova giving the opening keynote [2].

After the welcoming of panelists and participants by IFIMES Director Zijad Becirovic, Madam Algayerová's keynote address served as both a warning and a rallying cry, translating as follows: the survival of press freedom must not rest solely on the shoulders of journalists—it is a collective (societal) burden to bear; it is a call to action.

The UN Undersecretary General's keynote contribution particularly underscored the essential role played by free media in exposing abuses, fostering transparency, contributing to trust-building in society, and holding power to account—a theme regrettably deeply resonant in our current world stage.

2 Excellency Algayerová is the IFIMES Board member.

The global picture is bleak. With at least 124 journalists killed in 2024 alone, we are witnessing an alarming erosion of press-related freedoms. Journalists across continents are being branded as foreign agents, silenced through intimidation or imprisonment, and, in the most harrowing cases, assassinated for simply carrying out their professional mandate. The digital realm, once a sanctuary for free expression, has increasingly become a battleground. Surveillance, cyberattacks, and coordinated disinformation campaigns threaten not only media actors but the very integrity of public discourse as a whole.

Algayerova also emphasized that the issue is not confined to autocratic regimes alone. Even in democratic societies, the rise of misinformation and polarized media networks has sown public distrust, creating fertile ground for manipulation, extremism, and authoritarian narratives. "With each freedom comes also responsibility," she noted, underscoring the vital need for ethical journalism and robust media standards.

Yet amid these dark clouds, the message is not one of despair but of determination. The international legal architecture—anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—remains a bulwark of democracy. Institutions like the OSCE, Council of Europe, and various watchdog organizations such as Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists continue to monitor, advocate, and report with courage and consistency.

Still, the future begs for more than observation. It demands action. Strengthening international collaboration through

cross-border investigative efforts like the Panama Papers, leveraging tools like the UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists, and holding perpetrators to account through various diplomatic, legal, and policy mechanisms are essential steps. These mechanisms represent the teeth of the international system. While some may be perhaps symbolic, they remain capable of biting when reinforced by political will and public endorsement.

Moreover, Excellency Algayerová advocated for a stronger stance against digital repression. She called for the recognition of internet shutdowns and digital censorship as violations of human rights and urged governments and institutions to challenge such practices through legal means. "We need to keep digital spaces open," she said, pointing to examples such as Iran, where encrypted messaging apps like Signal have become lifelines for journalists despite persistent state efforts to block them. This highlights the need for anti-surveillance technologies and pressure on tech companies to uphold digital rights and transparency. The combination of these collective actions, modern characterization, and stances will be instrumental for the next decade ahead. It will define the landscape of the very battleground we must navigate with vigilance, resolve, and unwavering commitment to fundamental rights.

And perhaps the most hopeful path also lies in prevention: fostering media literacy and civic education, as exemplified by Finland's forward-looking curriculum, and embedding a culture of critical thinking that empowers our future genera-

tions. Equipping citizens—particularly youth—with the skills to discern misinformation and understand media structures is essential to reinject trust in journalism and in democratic processes more broadly.

The larger context of Algayerova's key-note remarks aligns closely with the theme of the OSCE's SHDM: civil society's indispensable role in the protection and promotion of international human rights law. Free media is, after all, one of civil society's most potent tools. It gives voice to the marginalized, shines light in dark places, and forces accountability on systems that would otherwise operate in secrecy. Without it, the very scaffolding of human rights protection begins to falter.

Ultimately, the keynote address of Her Excellency Olga Algayerova reminds us that the defense of media freedom is not the concern of journalists alone. It is a shared democratic duty and common necessity, stretching from global institutions to national governments, from civil society to every single individual who values unhampered real-world insight. The world we leave behind—one where ethical journalism is either silenced or celebrated—depends on the choices we make today.

Nora Wolf

POSTFACE

Media's freedom from fax machines and rotary phones to AI

There was a time when the story left our hands with a sound—an abrasive, stuttering whine as a fax machine dragged ink across thermal paper, translating urgency into lines and smudges. In those moments hunched in the back office of a half-lit newsroom or leaning over a borrowed machine in a provincial hotel, journalism felt like an act both mechanical and intimate. You fed the page through, listened for the connection, and hoped that what you had seen, what you had risked being present to witness, would arrive intact on the other side. Sometimes it didn't. Lines dropped. Pages jammed. But the intention was pure, to transmit truth as faithfully as the available technology allowed.

For those who began their careers in the late nineteen seventies, the evolution of media is not an abstraction but a lived topography. It stretches from typewriters and rotary phones to algorithmic feeds and artificial intelligence. Along that arc lies not only the story of technological progress but also a subtler, more troubling shift: the changing relationship between journalism, power, and, sadly, the truth.

In the early years the constraints were obvious and material. Filing a story from a conflict zone meant locating a working telephone line, sometimes in a restaurant, sometimes in a government building, and occasionally in a place you had no business being. You dictated your copy to an editor thousands of miles away, speaking carefully, aware that every word cost money and that interruptions could erase entire paragraphs. There was no illusion of speed; there was only persistence. Yet within those limitations, there was a peculiar freedom. The slowness imposed a discipline. Verification was not optional; it was survival. A mistake could not be quietly edited after publication; it traveled with the same stubborn permanence as the truth.

That sense of responsibility was perhaps most acute in places where the stakes were highest. In refugee camps in Darfur, where the air carried both dust and despair often suffocating me and leaving me with nightmares three decades later, reporting was less about narrative flourish and more about bearing witness. The camps were not abstractions or statistics; they were landscapes of human endurance. Children with eyes too old for their faces, mothers negotiating the impossible arithmetic of hunger, aid workers stretched beyond capacity, and rebels waiting to kidnap young girls in the dark of the night—these were the realities that demanded transmission. There was no question then of whether such stories mattered. The urgency was self-evident.

And yet even in those environments, the act of reporting was mediated by the tools at hand: a notebook, a tape recorder, or a camera if you were lucky. The delay between observation and publication created a space for reflection. You had time,

actually forced time, to consider what you had seen, to contextualize it, and to question your own assumptions. The story was not simply what happened; it was what it meant.

Contrast this with the present, where immediacy has become both a virtue and a liability. The digital revolution promised democratization; anyone with an internet connection could, in theory, participate in the production and dissemination of information. And to some extent this promise has been fulfilled. Voices once marginalized now find platforms. Stories that might have been ignored by traditional gatekeepers can reach global audiences within minutes.

But the same mechanisms that enable this expansion also erode the very foundations of trust upon which journalism depends. The proliferation of "fake news," manipulated videos, and algorithmically amplified misinformation has created an environment in which certainty is elusive. The question is no longer simply "What happened?" but "Can we trust what we are seeing at all?"

This epistemic instability is not merely a technological problem; it is a structural one. Over the past few decades the ownership of media has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of individuals and corporations, many with explicit political or economic agendas. The consequences of this consolidation are subtle but profound. Editorial independence, once considered the bedrock of credible journalism, becomes contingent and subject to the interests of those who control the platforms.

The result is a form of affiliation that can, at times, resemble enslavement. News organizations that once prided themselves on their autonomy find themselves navigating the expectations of owners whose priorities may be far removed from the principles of freedom of information and expression. The tension is not always overt; it often manifests in what is not covered, in the stories that are quietly deprioritized, and in the angles that are subtly discouraged.

For a journalist who has reported from war zones and humanitarian crises, this shift is particularly disquieting. The role of media in such contexts is not merely to inform but to uphold the principles enshrined in international humanitarian law and international human rights. Reporting on violations, whether they occur in a besieged city or a neglected refugee camp, is an act of accountability. It brings visibility to suffering that might otherwise remain hidden and, in doing so, exerts pressure on those in power to respond.

Historically, this function has been both celebrated and contested. During the early years of the Cold War media organizations navigated a similarly fraught landscape. Ideological divisions shaped coverage, and propaganda on all sides blurred the line between information and persuasion. Yet even within that environment there remained a widespread belief in the possibility of objective reporting. Journalists understood their role as intermediaries between events and the public, tasked with presenting facts as accurately as possible, even when those facts were inconvenient.

Today, that belief is under strain. The fragmentation of media ecosystems has created parallel realities, each sustained by its

own sources, its own narratives, and its own interpretations of truth. Social media platforms, driven by engagement metrics, amplify content that provokes strong emotional responses, often at the expense of nuance and accuracy. In such an environment, the slow, methodical work of journalism struggles to compete with the immediacy and virality of misinformation.

This is not to suggest that the past was a golden age. Journalism has always been imperfect, shaped by the biases and limitations of those who practice it. There were errors, omissions, and failures, alas, some of them significant. But there was also a shared framework within which those failures could be recognized and addressed. Trust, while never absolute, was sufficiently robust to sustain a meaningful dialogue between media and the public.

The erosion of that trust is perhaps the most significant challenge facing journalism today. When audiences no longer believe in the integrity of information, the very purpose of media is called into question. The consequences extend beyond the profession itself; they affect the functioning of democratic societies, the protection of human rights, and the prospects for conflict resolution.

Consider the role of media in post-conflict environments. In the aftermath of violence, the process of truth and reconciliation depends, in part, on the availability of reliable information. Journalists can contribute by documenting events, amplifying marginalized voices, and facilitating a collective understanding of what occurred. This, in turn, can support

efforts to rebuild social cohesion and prevent the recurrence of conflict.

In South Africa, during the transition from apartheid to democracy, media played a crucial role in this process. Reporting on the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought the realities of past abuses into the public sphere, enabling a national conversation about accountability and forgiveness. The coverage was not without controversy, but it demonstrated the potential of journalism to contribute constructively to societal healing. I know. I was there when Nelson Mandela walked out of Victor Verster Prison.

Similarly, in other contexts, from the favelas of Brazil to the urban centers of East Asia, the presence of committed, independent journalists has helped to illuminate the complexities of social and economic inequality. These stories do more than inform; they challenge assumptions, provoke debate, and at times, inspire action.

Yet the capacity of media to fulfill this role is increasingly constrained. Financial pressures have led to the abbreviation of foreign bureaus, reducing the ability of news organizations to maintain a sustained presence in regions that require long-term coverage. Freelancers and local journalists often fill the gap, but they do so under precarious conditions, limited resources, and support.

At the same time, the speed of digital news cycles encourages a focus on immediate events at the expense of deeper analysis. Stories are published quickly, updated frequently, and forgot-

ten just as rapidly. The space for context, so essential to understanding complex issues, is diminished.

For younger generations of journalists, the challenges are different but no less significant. Access to information has never been greater; a vast array of sources is available at the click of a button. But this abundance can be deceptive. The ease of searching can create the illusion of knowledge, leading some to substitute quick online queries for thorough, on-the-ground reporting. The craft of journalism, with its emphasis on verification, context, and critical thinking, risks being overshadowed by the convenience of digital tools.

This is not a condemnation of technology but a call for its thoughtful integration. The tools themselves are neutral; it is how they are used that matters. Artificial intelligence, for example, has the potential to enhance investigative reporting, to analyze large datasets, and to uncover patterns that might otherwise go unnoticed. But it also raises questions about authenticity, accountability, and the boundaries between human judgment and automated processes.

Amid these complexities, it is tempting to adopt a pessimistic outlook. The challenges are real, and their implications are far-reaching. But to do so would be to overlook the resilience of journalism as a practice and a profession.

History suggests that media has indeed passed through periods of uncertainty before. The mid-twentieth century, with its geopolitical tensions and technological transformations, presented its own set of challenges. And yet, from that peri-

od emerged some of the most enduring examples of rigorous, impactful reporting.

What distinguishes the current moment is not the presence of crisis but its nature. The issues we face are not solely external; they are internal to the structures and systems that sustain media. Addressing them requires not only adaptation but also reflection, a willingness to reconsider fundamental assumptions about the role of journalism in society.

In this context, personal experience becomes a valuable lens. The memory of sending reports via fax, of dictating stories from a restaurant telephone, of walking through refugee camps and urban neighborhoods in search of truth—these are not merely nostalgic recollections. They are reminders of a set of principles that remain relevant: the importance of presence, the necessity of verification, and the responsibility to bear witness.

They also highlight a paradox. Despite the limitations of earlier technologies, there was, in many respects, a greater sense of autonomy. Journalists operated within constraints, but those constraints were largely logistical rather than ideological. Today the barriers are less visible but often more pervasive, embedded in the economic and political structures that shape media organizations.

The path forward is not a return to the past but a re-articulation of its core values in a contemporary context. This involves reaffirming the commitment to independence, investing in investigative reporting, and fostering a culture of critical in-

quiry. It also requires engaging with audiences in new ways, rebuilding trust through transparency and accountability.

Education plays a crucial role in this process. Training the next generation of journalists to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape while maintaining the integrity of their craft is essential. This includes not only technical skills but also an understanding of ethics, law, and the broader social impact of their work.

Ultimately, the future of media will be shaped by the choices of those who practice it and those who consume it. The demand for reliable, meaningful information has not diminished; if anything, it has become more urgent. The question is whether the structures that produce and disseminate that information can evolve to meet the needs of the present moment.

There are reasons for cautious optimism. Across the world, there are journalists who continue to report with courage and integrity, often under difficult circumstances. There are organizations experimenting with new models of ownership and funding, seeking to reduce dependence on concentrated wealth. And there are audiences who, despite the noise, continue to seek out credible sources.

The limbo we are experiencing is perhaps a transitional phase, a period of recalibration rather than decline. It is uncomfortable, uncertain, and at times disorienting. But it also presents an opportunity to redefine what journalism can and should be.

In the end, the essence of the profession remains unchanged. It is about telling stories that matter, about giving voice to those who might otherwise go unheard, and about holding power to account. The tools will continue to evolve, as they always have. The challenge is to ensure that the principles guiding their use evolve as well.

And this is precisely what makes this eBook so important; it shows the way back. Offering a route forward, it rediscovers the core principles of trust, accuracy, and public service. Rather than chasing trends, it refocuses on what truly matters: credible reporting that serves the reader. In an age of misinformation and declining confidence, this guide provides an essential blueprint for restoring integrity and purpose to the craft.

The sound of the fax machine may have faded, replaced by the silent transmission of digital data. But the underlying task, the transmission of truth, endures. And in that continuity lies the possibility of renewal, and we are obliged to be relevant.

Thanos Kalamidas

CLOSING NOTE

From Helsinki to AI: Media Freedom, Accountability, and the Future of Trust

It is truly a privilege to ink a closing reflection to this GAFG eBook, which emerges as a continuation of an initiative I had the honor to help initiate. Building upon the sustained work with the leading cross-continental and pan-European FOR As this volume reflects on these decades of a genuinely global outreach—crossing geographic, disciplinary, and conceptual boundaries. At a time when media landscapes are increasingly shaped by societal polarization, technological disruption, binary oversimplifications of the world affairs, and evolving conflict dynamics, the role of independent, responsible journalism remains indispensable. Not only does it inform, but it documents, contextualizes, and ultimately contributes to accountability—particularly in situations marked by humanitarian crises and violations of international law. In that sense, this publication stands as both an intellectual endeavor and a

normative reminder of the essential linkage between media freedom, democratic resilience, and societal stability.

Equally significant is the composition behind this work. By bringing together contributors from different ages, geographies, and affiliations, it conveys a message that transcends its academic content. In an era increasingly defined by fragmentation—of socio-political (and hence, media) ecosystems, of public discourse, and of international relations—this collective effort offers a rare counterpoint.

As trust in media is increasingly challenged by misinformation, digital manipulation, and the erosion of professional standards, and as both traditional and new media struggle to adapt to a rapidly changing technological environment, the need for responsibility, innovation, and cooperation becomes ever more pressing. This is what each and every one of our keynotes, Bećirović, Algayerova, and Clemons, as well as the panelists (Dzodin, Reinisch, Coyle, and Pusić), stressed out.

This volume, therefore, does not merely observe these transformations; it implicitly calls for a recalibration—one that restores credibility, strengthens media literacy, and reaffirms that the pursuit of truth and justice remains a shared and indivisible responsibility.

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Ever since the Helsinki Final Act set its decalogue in motion in 1975, the participating states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe have formally recognized the universal significance of human rights and fundamental

freedoms—among them, the freedom of media. Yet, as repeatedly evidenced, declarative consensus does not automatically translate into coherent practice. The commitments reaffirmed in the Copenhagen Document (1990) and Moscow Document (1991) stand today less as milestones of achievement and more as benchmarks against which current realities are to be measured.

Media, in its authentic function, is not a passive transmitter of information but an active constituent of democratic architecture. It is pivotal in promoting human rights, inclusion, equality, and social cohesion—particularly in the delicate phases of conflict prevention, tension relaxation, and, when conflicts prove unavoidable, in facilitating truth-telling and reconciliation. This has been consistently reiterated by successive OSCE representatives on freedom of the media, as well as within numerous formal and informal fora across the OSCE space. Still, one must ask: if media is so central, why is it so persistently vulnerable?

The answer lies in the evolving nature of constraints. Contemporary pressures on media freedom are no longer predominantly coercive in their visible form; they are systemic, calibrated, and frequently justified. Societal polarization, protracted armed conflicts, and the disruptive deployment of emerging technologies have created an environment in which independent journalism operates under compounded strain. In such contexts, the role of media becomes even more essential: to inform the public accurately, to document violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and to contribute to accountability mechanisms that transcend immediate political interests.

However, the OSCE world is currently confronted with a paradigm-shifting challenge—the mala fide utilization of advanced technologies. Artificial intelligence, in particular, embodies a duality that is difficult to reconcile. On one hand, it offers unprecedented tools for information dissemination, verification, and early warning. On the other, it enables sophisticated forms of manipulation, including deepfakes and automated disinformation campaigns, which undermine trust at its very core. Thus, AI simultaneously empowers and destabilizes the very principles upon which the OSCE's comprehensive security concept rests.

This tension necessitates a recalibration of approach. The question is no longer whether technology should be regulated, but how to ensure that such regulation does not become another instrument of control. The OSCE must navigate between overreach and inertia—between the risk of stifling innovation and the danger of allowing informational anarchy. In this regard, examining AI through the prism of international humanitarian law and international human rights law becomes indispensable. It provides not only a normative compass but also a legal framework within which emerging threats can be assessed and addressed.

Equally important is the restoration of trust—arguably the most depleted resource in today's media ecosystems. Without trust, information loses its societal function and becomes mere noise. Therefore, efforts must extend beyond technical solutions to include the strengthening of professional standards, the safeguarding of journalistic independence, and the enhancement of digital media literacy. The latter is particu-

larly crucial in an age where "deep technologies" blur the line between reality and fabrication.

Ultimately, the OSCE space stands at a critical juncture. It must decide whether its foundational commitments are to remain declarative artifacts or evolve into operational principles capable of withstanding contemporary challenges. Platforms that bring together participating states, civil society, media professionals, and international organizations are indispensable—not as ceremonial gatherings, but as genuine arenas of accountability and strategy.

If media freedom is indeed a cornerstone of security, as so often proclaimed, then its defense—as Algayerova and Clemons stated—must be treated not as a peripheral obligation but as a central strategic priority. Anything less would risk transforming the OSCE from a community of values into a geography of cacophonic narratives.

Geneva, March 2026

Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarević,
GAFG's co-founder and ABC

APPENDIX

OSCE Ministerial Aftermath: Europe's Hard Choice Selective or Collective Security?

The return of armed conflict to Europe raises questions about the endurance of the foundations of Europe's post–Cold War security architecture. For decades, European security relied on the assumption that dialogue, restraint, and shared norms could mitigate rivalry and prevent escalation. This assumption was rooted in what has often been described as the Helsinki spirit, which embodies commitment to cooperative, comprehensive, and indivisible security.

The 32nd Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), held on the 4th and 5th of December 2025 in Vienna under the Finnish chairpersonship ("OSCE Ministerial Council Reaffirms Continued Relevance of Helsinki Principles and Sets the Path for Reforms to Strengthen the Organization | Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe" 2025), took place amid persistent geopolitical tensions and ongoing conflicts within the OSCE area. While participating states reaffirmed OSCE's foundational principles ("OSCE Ministerial Council Reaf-

firms Continued Relevance of Helsinki Principles and Sets the Path for Reforms to Strengthen the Organization | Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe" 2025), the gap between declared commitments and prevailing realities was evident. This article examines the relationship between the gradual weakening of cooperative security practices and Europe's current crisis, using the Ministerial Council as a key analytical point of reference.

The Helsinki Spirit and the Foundations of Cooperative Security

The Helsinki spirit originated in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which established a multilateral framework for managing political and military rivalry between the East and the West through dialogue rather than confrontation. The Helsinki Final Act was a child of detente, which was used as a tool of comprehensive relaxation of geopolitical and ideological tensions between the superpowers at the time, the Soviet Union and the United States intact (Bajrektarevic 2014). Its core idea was that security could not be durable without mutual restraint, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and adherence to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Helsinki principles were deliberately formulated in broad terms to allow states with divergent political systems, historical experiences, and security perceptions to coexist within a shared geographical space through the mutual recognition of all borders in Europe—and hence acceptance to coexist in

geography and with ideology of its own choice (Bajrektarevic 2017).

After the end of the Cold War, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) set on a new course in managing the historic change taking place in Europe and responding to the new challenges of the post-Cold War period. CSCE was not created as an enforcement mechanism (even though certain elements could have been enforced) but as a confidence and dialogue-building process ("Reviving the Helsinki Spirit" 2024). Hence, in its elements, the Helsinki spirit was a norm-setting entity with a monitoring compliance mechanism. The Helsinki spirit, therefore, followed geopolitical and ideological dynamics of overextension of superpowers; hence, it migrated from political will/accord into legal and normative order. In December 1994, CSCE became institutionalized as OSCE by a decision of the Budapest Summit of Heads of State or Government, which gave it its current institutional form we know today. ("History | Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, ")

Early Fractures in the European Security Order

Debates about the current crisis focus on its most visible manifestations, particularly the full-scale war in Ukraine. However, from a structural perspective, the erosion of cooperative security is debated to have begun far earlier than 2022. Competing interpretations identify critical turning points in 2014 (the annexation of Crimea), even in the immediate post–Cold War period (the early 1990s), and the Yugoslav crisis (1990s).

However, the fractures can be traced even to an earlier point, which was the non-compliance with the 1945 Potsdam Conference decisions (Oxford Public International Law 2009). Allied forces agreed to demilitarize and neutralize Germany at the conference. Instead, the 3 Western occupation forces (UK, USA, and France) decided to form Western Germany and to remilitarize it by forming a military alliance in Europe, NATO (NATO History | NATO), which was directly contradictory to the Potsdam Conference Peace Treaty.

During the period of German reunification (1990s), discussions about the future of European security architecture were led among Western leaders and the Soviet leadership. These talks, while not in the form of international treaties, included repeated assurances that NATO would not expand eastward beyond the territory of the former German Democratic Republic (This was also reaffirmed by the Federal Chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Kohl, and the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of West Germany, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, at the time. These statements, however, have since become part of a contested historical record in light of subsequent developments (Němcová et al. 2013).

From a diplomatic and legal standpoint, the absence of formal treaty obligations complicates retrospective assessment. Nevertheless, the divergence between political assurances and subsequent institutional developments contributed to a growing perception, particularly in Moscow, that the principle of indivisible security was being applied unevenly.

Selective Application of Collective Security

The question of inclusive European security predates the end of the Cold War. At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, Allied powers agreed on the demilitarization and neutralization of Germany as the key to postwar stability (Oxford Public International Law 2009). Yet in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the western occupation zones evolved into the Federal Republic of Germany, which was rearmed and subsequently integrated into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In contrast, Austria (which was under four-power occupation: US, UK, France, and Soviet Union) emerged as a unified, demilitarized, and permanently neutral state in 1955 (Oxford Public International Law 2024). This arrangement, accepted by all four occupying powers, three Western and the Soviet Union, contributed to Austria's long-term stability and regional predictability. These differing outcomes illustrate an early divergence between collective and selective approaches to European security.

These historical precedents illuminate a recurring tension between security arrangements designed to include all actors equally and those used to consolidate security for some while generating insecurity for others. This gradual shift from inclusive to selective security practices has been and remains a structural challenge to the Helsinki security framework.

Then came Federal Socialist Yugoslavia: External actions that intensified confrontational forces within Yugoslavia, the manner in which the implosion of that country was handled

by European actors, and the subsequent external bombing campaign—which reportedly included strikes on civilian infrastructure and the alleged use of munitions containing depleted plutonium—represented another major blow to the collective security architecture in Europe, particularly within the OSCE framework.

To multiply controversies and unfortunate symbolics, the NATO bombing of Belgrade—the city where the Nonaligned Movement was born in 1961 and that was carried out without authorization from the UN Security Council (nicknamed 'Merciful Angel'!)—marked the first bombing of the city since the Nazi attacks in the 1940s.

The intervention, conducted without UN endorsement, ultimately led to the separation of part of Serbia's territory and induced recognition of Kosovo as an independent—but still today non-UN member—state. These violent episodes remain a source of significant controversy today and continue to lack broad consensus in both academic and political spheres, being very often cited by the defenders of the Crimea annexation that came 15 years after.

The OSCE as a Forum and Its Structural Constraints

The OSCE continues to function as the principal multilateral framework in which European states, alongside partners from North America and Central Asia, engage on an equal and inclusive basis. OSCE's annual Ministerial Council is intended to set political direction, reaffirm commitments, and provide

strategic guidance ("Secretary General Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu's Report to the 32nd OSCE Ministerial Council | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe" 2025). Therefore, both the International Institute IFIMES and GAFG (Global Academy for Future Governance) closely follow and support the work of the OSCE. It regularly does by organizing their own side events at major annual OSCE forums and summits.

At the same time, the 32nd Ministerial Council showed the growing limitations of the OSCE's consensus-based decision-making model. While consensus preserves inclusiveness and procedural equality of the organization, it also constrains collective action in periods of deep political disagreement. The council's outcomes reaffirmed institutional continuity, but substantive outcomes remained limited, reflecting a broader pattern of dialogue without convergence.

Ukraine and the Return of War to Europe

The war in Ukraine has dominated the OSCE's agenda for several years, and reaffirmed support for Ukraine was featured prominently in ministerial statements in 2025 ("31st OSCE Ministerial Council | Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe"; "Secretary General Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu's Report to the 32nd OSCE Ministerial Council | Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe" 2025). While the conflict escalated dramatically in 2022, its roots are embedded in earlier political, security, and institutional developments. The Ministerial Council's discussions reflected both shared humanitarian concern and profound disagreement

over responsibility, causality, and resolution pathways.

The persistence of war within a region governed by cooperative security norms underscores a central paradox, which is that principles designed to prevent conflict continue to be reaffirmed, even as their practical application becomes increasingly contested and constrained.

Fragmentation of Shared Meaning

Despite repeated reaffirmations of Helsinki principles, their interpretation now varies significantly among participating states. The states hold diverging threat perceptions, historical narratives, and security priorities, which have fragmented the shared understanding of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the non-use of force.

This fragmentation represents one of the most serious challenges to cooperative security. As several scholars, including Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarevic, have argued, norms lose their stabilizing function when their meaning starts to disappear, even if their language remains formally intact, finally bringing the devolution of security from collective to selective (Bajrektarevic 2014).

The 32nd Ministerial Council, however, demonstrated that cooperation persists in specific areas, such as humanitarian protection, media freedom, countering human trafficking, youth participation in mediation, and arms control ("OSCE Ministerial Council Reaffirms Continued Relevance of Hel-

sinki Principles and Sets the Path for Reforms to Strengthen the Organization | Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe" 2025). These initiatives reflect the continued relevance of the OSCE's human dimension and preserve essential elements of the Helsinki spirit.

Nonetheless, such cooperation increasingly occurs in compartmentalized settings, largely detached from the core questions of military security and strategic stability. While these efforts are valuable, they alone cannot substitute for a shared vision of collective security.

Continuity Without Convergence: Reversing the security devolution trend

The Vienna meeting symbolized institutional continuity amid strategic divergence. Procedural resilience and leadership transition are preserved. Nevertheless, shared strategic direction remains absent. The endurance of dialogue with a weakening collective agreement within the OSCE can be described as continuity without convergence. A question remains as to how continuity can be sustained over time, particularly in the face of deepening differences.

The 32nd OSCE Ministerial Council suggests that Europe's security crisis is not the result of a single rupture but of a cumulative weakening of cooperative security practices. The Helsinki spirit has not disappeared or been abandoned. The Helsinki spirit has been instead sidelined as security has become increasingly selective rather than collective.

The OSCE remains a necessary platform for dialogue and normative reference. Yet the return of war to Europe highlights the limits of institutional frameworks when inclusivity, trust, and indivisible security are no longer interpreted in the same way. The Helsinki principles remain a possible foundation for renewed engagement. Whether those principles can once again function as the organizing principle of Europe's security order depends on political will and a recommitment to truly collective security by all states.

Silvie Drahošová

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Diplomat Magazine supporting Panel on Democracy and Media Freedom

The annual summit on democracy, freedom, and the media is taking place in Vienna on 17th and 18th March. In the historic Hofburg (imperial governing compound), 57 member states of the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), plus dozens of their partners from the Middle East and Asia, will discuss the current geopolitical moment and the security challenges of today. Media and democratization are an inseparable part of any sustainable European security and socio-political and economic stability.

Opening an important panel before the final part of the summit, CD Magazine, along with the International Institute *IFIMES*, scientific journal *European Perspectives*, and the platform for cultural exchanges and enhancements *Culture for Peace,* will elaborate on the connection between media, disruptions (conflicts, technologies), truth, and reconciliation, without which any future of Europe is unthinkable. The high-level summit will gather diplomats and media from around the world. The anticipation is record high this year, since any forthcoming, just resolution of the Ukrainian crisis will not be possible without media freedom and the OSCE.

The OSCE is the second largest multilateral system in the world, right after the United Nations. A unique organization that brings together everyone from Vancouver to Vladivostok, it began as a strategic conference to relax tensions between the Western and Soviet blocs, in the form of the Helsinki Decalogue in 1975.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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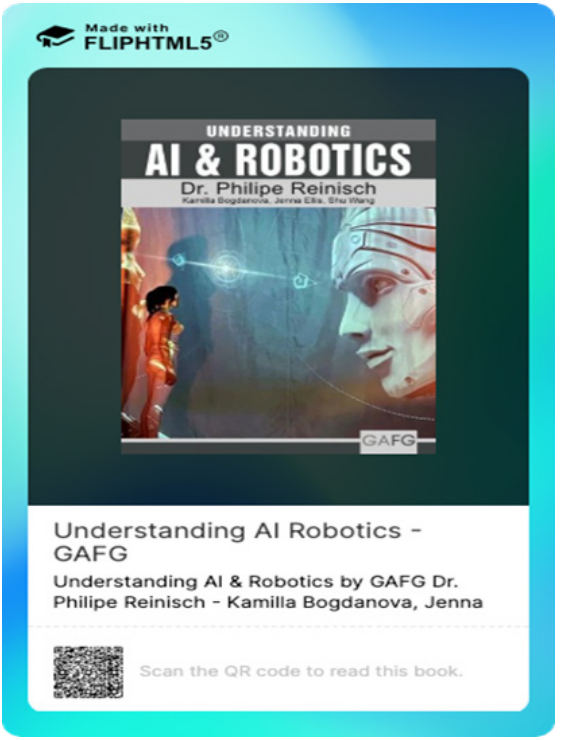
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Crossdimensional and multidisciplinary in its acting, thinking, and outreach. GA tries to tackle all five UNdeclared spaces (land, sea, airspace, (near) outer space, and cyberspace), holding the global vision while respecting local/regional peculiarities—especially the need of the Global South to link economic progress with human development that is just, fair, and attainable.

Modus Operandi:

How to recognize challenges for decision-makers and for those who aid decision-making by preparing the necessary decisions and materials to see in fast-moving technology what is relevant and what is an overestimated media story or a narrative utilized for stock exchange boosts. It helps identify issues that must be urgently tackled by the state and corporate sector, reducing costs—social, financial, labor, political, environmental, and ethical—while focusing attention and action on what truly matters. GAFG is not an expenditure; Global Academy is your partner to save, mitigate, and reduce—if not entirely avoid—hidden and entangled costs. All of this is carried out in a neutral and discreet way, especially for clients from the Global South, who are often institutionally less capacitated for impartial, fast, and qualitative responses.

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OF OSCE AND Media

Steve Clemons, Zijad Bećirović, Olga Algayerová

Media, in its authentic function, is not a passive transmitter of information but an active constituent of democratic architecture. It is pivotal in promoting human rights, inclusion, equality, and social cohesion—particularly in the delicate phases of conflict prevention, tension relaxation, and, when conflicts prove unavoidable, in facilitating truth-telling and reconciliation. This has been consistently reiterated by successive OSCE Representatives on Freedom of the Media, as well as within numerous formal and informal fora across the OSCE space.

If media freedom is indeed a cornerstone of security, as so often proclaimed, then its defense– as Algayerova, and Clemons stated – must be treated not as a peripheral obligation but as a central strategic priority. Anything less would risk transforming the OSCE from a community of values into a geography of cacophonic narratives.

Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarević,
GAFG's co-founder and ABC

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